

## Uniform Traffic Citations Review

### Audit Report 201819-03

June, 14, 2019

### Executive Summary

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Pursuant to Section 316.650, Florida Statute (F.S.), the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (Department) is responsible for preparing and supplying citations to all traffic enforcement agencies in the state of Florida. Traffic enforcement agencies include any agency or governmental entity designated the authority, under Sections 316.640, F.S., and 320.58, F.S., to enforce the traffic laws of Florida. Types of citations issued include standard Uniform Traffic Citations (UTC) and driving under the influence (DUI) UTCs.

Section 318.18 (8)(a), F.S., requires citation data to be electronically transmitted through the Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers (FCCC). The data is transmitted through the Traffic Citation Accounting and Transmission System (TCATS) which is accomplished with a contract between FCCC and the Department. Data is transmitted from FCCC to the Department for processing.

The Bureau of Records (BOR) within the Division of Motorist Services is responsible for the maintenance of Florida's driver license records, including the collection and storage of UTC data. It is the joint responsibility of the courts, enforcement agencies, and the Department to account for all UTC.

The purpose of this audit was to review and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's UTC Program and compliance with applicable laws, Department policy, and procedure.

Our review determined the accuracy and accountability of citation inventory could be improved by implementing a formal UTC reconciliation process and performing citation audits. Currently, the BOR does not have a formal process for reconciling citation inventory. Additionally, required Quality Process Inventory (QPI) audits, designed to aid in the accuracy and accountability of citation inventory, are not performed in accordance with the UTC manual, as only 12 have been conducted statewide since 2012. We recommended implementing a formal reconciliation process of citation inventory and performing periodic QPI audits to ensure the accuracy and accountability of citation inventory and driver records.

Our review also determined developing a standardized process to document, review, and monitor TCATS error corrections would enhance the consistency and validity of error corrections. While observing the TCATS error correction process and during discussions with Department members, we noted liaisons have their own method for

correcting errors in their region. Senior liaisons are only required to account for the total number of TCATS errors worked but are not required to provide supporting documentation to management confirming the attempt to correct and eliminate errors. We recommended creating a standardized process for documenting, reviewing, and monitoring TCATS errors corrections.

## Background and Introduction

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States need timely, accurate, complete, accessible, and uniform traffic records to identify and prioritize traffic safety issues and to choose appropriate safety countermeasures and evaluate their effectiveness. The BOR within the Division of Motorist Services is responsible for the maintenance of Florida's driver license records, including the collection and storage of UTC data. A UTC is the official name for traffic ticket.

Currently, there are 67 clerk of courts, 320 Law enforcement agencies, and 17 electronic citations (e-citations /tickets) approved vendors. During the 2018 calendar year, 2,964,856 traffic citations were issued by all traffic enforcement agencies (agencies) in Florida.

### TCATS

Section 318.18 (8)(a), F.S., requires the Department to contract with the Florida Association of Court Clerks, Inc., to design, establish, operate, upgrade, and maintain an automated statewide Uniform Traffic Citation Accounting System, to be operated by the clerk of courts that must include, but not be limited to, the accounting for traffic infractions by type, a record of the disposition of the citations, and an accounting system for the fines assessed and the subsequent fine amounts paid to the clerk of courts.

The Department entered into an agreement with the Florida Association of Court Clerks, d.b.a. FCCC, in 1997 – 98 fiscal year for the technical efforts associated with the development and engineering support of TCATS. The current agreement with the FCCC is for the operation, service, and maintenance of TCATS beginning August 28, 2015, through June 30, 2020. The agreement requires monthly payments to the FCCC of \$76,158.75.

TCATS is an electronic system used by the Department to receive information regarding citations, arrests, and dispositions from various entities. The purpose of TCATS is to collect information relevant to traffic records-related citations in a central, statewide repository. Ideally, information from TCATS should be used to perform traffic safety analysis that identifies trends in citation issuance, prosecution, and case dispositions to improve and promote traffic safety.

TCATS is owned by the FCCC and provides an automated way all 67 clerk of courts' traffic systems can communicate with the UTC repository and allows for the daily electronic transmission of UTC information to the Department. TCATS eliminates the need for data entry of citation information at the Department. The FCCC, in coordination with the Department, prepares and distributes an interface control document (ICD) that is used by TCATS users to identify all information necessary to ensure data is transferred accurately. The ICD identifies the exact format information should be entered into TCATS, data options that are available within TCATS, and data definitions of TCATS files.

### **Citation Inventory Accountability**

Pursuant to Section 316.650, F.S., the Department is responsible for preparing and supplying citations to all agencies in the state of Florida. Agencies include any agency or governmental entity designated the authority, under Sections 316.640, F.S., and 320.58, F.S., to enforce the traffic laws of Florida, including tax collectors, universities, Florida College System institutions, school boards, or airport authorities. Types of citations issued include standard UTC and DUI UTC. It is the joint responsibility of the courts, agencies, and the Department to account for all UTC.

Agencies usually request citations annually or every other year, depending on the agencies' volume of citations issued. Citation requests are made through the Department's Court Assist email address or by directly emailing the designated Department member responsible for ordering citations. Paper citations are purchased from a vendor using the Department's budget. However, agencies using e-citations are responsible for contracting with one of the 17 Department approved vendors that provide an electronic traffic ticketing system (i.e. SmartCop). The Department's vendor is responsible for printing, warehousing, and shipping UTC books to all traffic enforcement agencies.

There is a total of 1,250 citations in a regular UTC paper carton, including 50 books with 25 citations per book and a total of 500 citations in a DUI paper citation carton, including 50 books with 10 citations per book. Each citation is prenumbered. Currently, the citation number algorithm format consists of seven alpha-numeric characters. The first six characters are generated using a base 36 conversion of unique numbers held within the Department's database. The seventh character is either a P (for paper) or E (for electronic). The new citation number format was implemented to support the increasing use of e-citations and improve data processing and accuracy.

When a paper citation order is received by the agency, the agency is required to examine the contents of the shipment immediately, verifying they have received all citations requested. A copy of the packing list received from the vendor is then

submitted to the Department indicating if there were any issues with the order. Damaged citations should be returned to the Department and mutilated and missing citations are voided from the Department's citation inventory records within the Department's database. E-citation orders are provided to an agency by email on an Excel spreadsheet generated by the Department's database. When e-numbers are provided to agencies, agencies are advised the proper process when adding the numbers to their e-citation software to prevent duplication errors due to possible alpha and numeric mistakes caused by manual input. Agencies should verify receipt of all e-citation numbers. A listing of all citations is maintained within the Department's database and a copy of the spreadsheets for e-citation orders and packing lists for paper citation orders are stored on the BOR's shared drive for tracking purposes.

All citation orders (paper and electronic) are requested and assigned to an agency within the Department's database by entering the agency's name, number of cartons requested (if applicable), and type of citation (regular UTC or DUI). An agency's citation inventory used within the last 12 months and the agency's total outstanding citation inventory populates in the Department's database at the time of order. If it appears an agency has an excessive amount of outstanding inventory, the agency is alerted by email of the amount of outstanding inventory; however, citation requests are never denied. Agencies are responsible for assigning citations to individuals within their organization and maintaining accurate records of all citations assigned to their agency.

Errors may be made in the process of writing citations, entering citation information into the clerk of courts' software or TCATS, and could be due to the information entered into TCATS not reconciling with information within the Department's database. Department members assist Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) and clerk of courts offices with correcting citation errors to ensure citation inventory is reconciled to the Department's database. Senior liaisons are required to provide training to LEA on how to properly complete a citation, perform periodic citation inventory audits to assist LEA with the maintenance and improvement of their UTC process, and assist clerk of courts offices with TCATS error corrections.

### **UTC Error Correction Process**

Section 316.650(3)(9a), F.S., requires LEA to submit paper or e-citations to the clerk of courts within 5 days after the citation has been issued to the violator. Section 43.41, F.S., gives the clerk of courts 10 days after disposition of a traffic violation to report the status to the Department. Section 318.14(7)(a) states all dispositions returned to the county requiring a correction to be resubmitted to the Department within 10 days after notification of the error.

Citations are required to be submitted to the clerk of courts by the issuing agency to process. Citation data is entered manually into TCATS through the clerk of courts

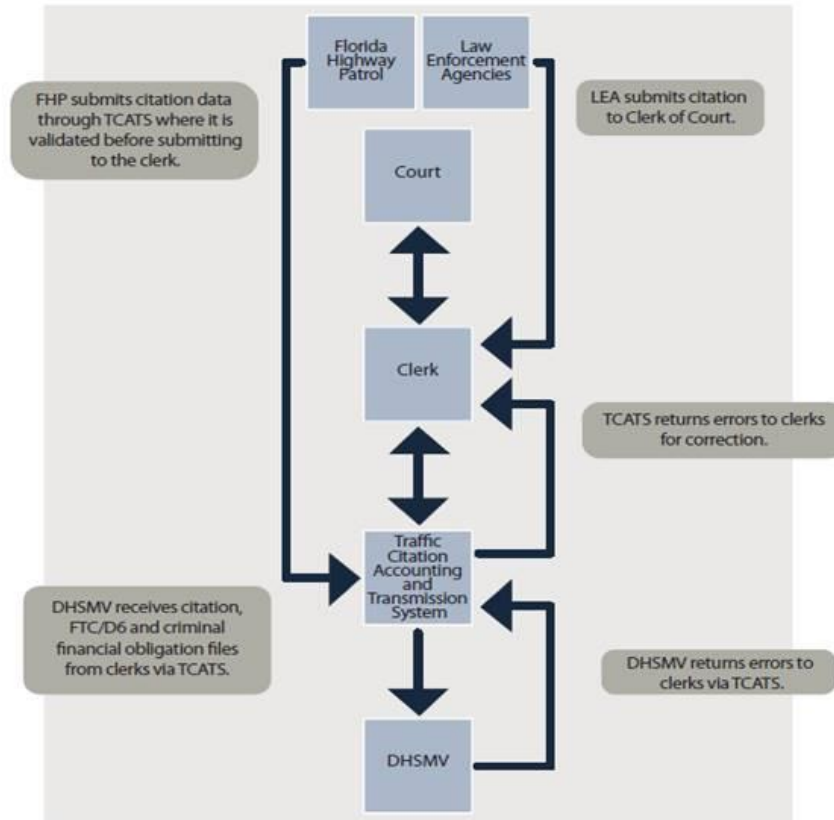
software applications or, if the issuing agency submits the citation through an electronic ticketing system, the citation data is uploaded automatically into the clerk of courts' software, if compatible. Citation data goes through several edit checks for accuracy and completeness. The first edit check is on the local level through the clerk of courts system. If the data passes the local level edit checks, the data is then uploaded to TCATS and transmitted to the FCCC. If the data does not pass the edit check on the local level, the information goes to a local error report that can only be viewed by the clerk of courts. However, Florida Highway Patrol submits citation data directly through TCATS where it is validated before it is submitted to the clerk of courts.

When citation data is sent to the FCCC, it goes through an additional edit check. If all required fields (according to the ICD) are entered correctly into TCATS by the clerk of courts, the data is transmitted to the Department through TCATS. If all required fields are not entered correctly into TCATS, the FCCC returns the data back to the clerk of courts as a list of errors that can be viewed in the Comprehensive Case Information System (CCIS) by the clerk of courts and Department members. CCIS is a subsystem of TCATS and is a secured single point of search for state wide court case information.

Once data files are sent to the Department electronically, TCATS attempts to upload the data to the Department's database and onto the violator's driving record. If the citation information received through TCATS matches the information in the Department's database, the information appears on the violator's driving record and the citation is cleared from inventory or goes to the citation inventory soft error queue if there is an issue with the citation. Errors within the citation inventory soft error queue can include errors that have valid citation numbers but have a key punch error, agencies using duplicate citation numbers, and/or agencies using citation numbers that were assigned to another agency. These errors are monitored daily for correction by Department staff. If the information submitted by the FCCC does not match the information in Department's database (name, date of birth, sex, driver license number, etc.), the data is returned to the clerk of courts as an error.

The following diagram depict the process flow of citation data within TCATS:

## Traffic Citation Accounting Transmission System (TCATS) Process Flow Diagram



### Findings and Recommendations

Overall, the UTC process is adequate; however, we noted the following key areas in which the Division of Motorist Services could implement improvements:

#### Citation Inventory Audits

**Finding No. 1:** The accuracy and accountability of citation inventory could be improved by implementing a formal UTC reconciliation process and performing citation audits.

To account for all UTC in accordance with traffic court rules and Department procedures contained in the UTC Manual, the Department established a Quality Process Inventory (QPI) Program. This program assists law enforcement agencies with the maintenance

and improvement of their UTC processes. The goal of the QPI Program is to improve the accuracy and timeliness of UTC system data, and the accuracy of the Florida driver record. The Department is required to review any agency authorized to issue UTC at the agency's request or the Department's discretion.

Section 3 of the UTC Manual – UTC Supply and Distribution Process (2)(g), states periodic audits are required to be performed by the BOR senior liaison officers for accountability purposes pursuant to 316.650 (2) - (8), F.S. Agencies are required to be audited every three to four years, unless audits are requested more frequently, or the Department suspects additional audits are necessary.

Currently, the BOR does not have a formal process for reconciling citation inventory. Department members, other than senior liaison officers, perform reviews of an agency's citation inventory at the time citations are ordered and at the agency's request by requesting a list of outstanding citation inventory from the Technical Assistance Center and forwarding it to the requesting agency. Our review determined that required QPI audits, designed to aid in the accuracy and accountability of citation inventory, are not performed in compliance with the UTC manual. The most recent QPI audits were conducted between October 12, 2012, and February 5, 2014. During this time, senior liaison officers performed nine QPI audits in FHP troops, and three QPI audits on other police departments.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend the Bureau of Records perform periodic QPI audits as required by Department policy to ensure the accuracy and accountability of citation inventory and the Florida driver record.

We also recommend the Bureau of Records implement a formal reconciliation process of citation inventory.

## **Management Response**

The BOR will modify the current responsibilities of the senior liaison officers to incorporate periodic QPI audits on Florida law enforcement agencies. The current policy in the UTC Manual will be updated to accurately reflect the expectations regarding conducting QPI audits. Additionally, the management team is pursuing changes to the citation inventory system in Phase II of the Motorist Modernization project, which will allow the liaisons to pull QPI samples. This will increase efficiency by replacing the current process which is time consuming and must be completed by Information Systems Administration. BOR has also established a strategic goal of reconciling the citation inventory of 5% of all unused citations per year and will focus

first on the agencies with the largest amounts of unused citations. This process and the related procedures will be documented in a new policy.

## ***Process Standardization***

**Finding No. 2:** Developing a standardized process to document, review, and monitor TCATS error corrections would enhance the consistency and validity of error corrections.

Section 316.650(2), F.S., states it is the joint responsibility for the courts, enforcement agencies, and the Department to account for all uniform traffic citations.

Senior liaison officers are responsible for working with law enforcement agencies, state attorneys and clerk of courts within their region to assist these agencies by troubleshooting TCATS errors and working with the Department's management and the FCCC to ensure citation data is efficiently transmitted through TCATS and to the Department's database.

During observations of the TCATS error correction process and discussions with members of the BOR, we noted liaisons have their own method for correcting errors in their region. Some members correct their TCATS errors during the required quarterly visits, where additional information is discussed, while others made additional trips for the sole purpose of correcting TCATS errors. Also, errors may be worked by liaisons at their regional office and then forwarded to the clerk of courts for correction.

Monthly, senior liaisons are required to submit the total number of TCATS errors they reviewed for a resolution (even if the error was not corrected) on the BOR's SharePoint site. Additionally, the total number of TCATS errors are indicated on the quarterly site visit form that is signed by a member of the clerk of courts.

Although the total number of TCATS errors reviewed by senior liaisons are indicated on SharePoint and the quarterly site visit form, there is no supporting documentation identifying the specific citation errors worked. Senior liaisons are not required to provide supporting documentation to management confirming the attempt to correct and eliminate errors. There was also no documentation to support management's review of the work performed by the senior liaisons.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend the Bureau of Records create a standardized process for documenting, reviewing, and monitoring TCATS error corrections.





## Management Response

BOR will develop a formalized process to ensure all senior liaison officers are consistently working with clerks of court to document, review, and monitor TCATS error corrections. This process will include implementing a standard tracking sheet, which clearly identifies the date, county, and number of errors worked per day for each county in the assigned region. The process would also require the liaisons to submit supporting documentation to the OMC II Manager and require the manager to select a sample from the liaison's submissions to ensure the information is consistent with the new process and consistent with the totals reported. This new process will be documented in the liaisons desk manual.

## **Purpose, Scope, and Methodology**

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The purpose of this audit was to review and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department Uniform Traffic Citation Program and compliance with applicable laws, Department policy and procedures.

The scope of this audit includes reviewing the acquisition, tracking, reconciliation, and error correction processes for the Department's Uniform Traffic Citation program

The methodology included:

- Reviewing applicable statutes, rules, manuals, and procedures;
- Reviewing federal grant agreements;
- Interviewing appropriate Department staff;
- Reviewing the citation distribution process;
- Reviewing TCATS and CCIS error information; and
- Observing TCATS error correction process.

## Distribution, Statement of Accordance, and Project Team

### Distribution

Terry L. Rhodes, Executive Director  
Jennifer Langston, Acting Chief of Staff  
Robert Kynoch, Director of Motorist Services  
Rick White, Deputy Director of Motorist Services  
Richie Frederick, Bureau Chief of Records

Melinda M. Miguel, Chief Inspector General  
Sherrill F. Norman, Auditor General

### Statement of Accordance

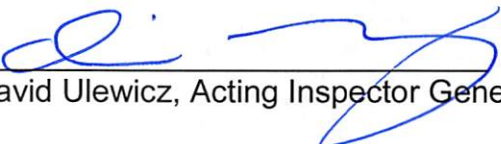
Section 20.055, Florida Statutes, requires the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles' Inspector General to review, evaluate, and report on policies, plans, procedures, accounting, financial, and other operations of the Department and to recommend improvements. This audit engagement was conducted in accordance with applicable *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* published by the Institute of Internal Auditors and *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General* published by the Association of Inspectors General.

### Project Team

Engagement conducted by:  
Vanessa Williams, Auditor  
John Brancale, Auditor

Under the supervision of:  
David Ulewicz, Audit Director

Approved by:

  
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David Ulewicz, Acting Inspector General


## ATTACHMENT - Management Response



Terry L. Rhodes  
Executive Director

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### MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 11, 2019  
TO: David Ulewicz, Audit Director  
FROM: Robert R. Kynoch, Director   
Division of Motorist Services  
SUBJECT: Management Response to the UTC Review Audit (201819-03)

The following is our response to the findings and recommendations presented in the report.

#### Finding 1 – Citation Inventory Audits

The accuracy and accountability of citation inventory could be improved by implementing a formal UTC reconciliation process and performing citation audits.

#### Recommendations

We recommend the Bureau of Records perform periodic QPI audits as required by Department policy to ensure the accuracy and accountability of citation inventory and the Florida driver record.

We also recommend the Bureau of Records implement a formal reconciliation process of citation inventory

#### Management Response

The Bureau of Records (BOR) will modify the current responsibilities of the senior liaison officers to incorporate periodic QPI audits on Florida law enforcement agencies. The current policy in the UTC Manual will be updated to accurately reflect the expectations regarding conducting QPI audits. Additionally, the management team is pursuing changes to the citation inventory system in Phase II of the Motorist Modernization project, which will allow the liaisons to pull QPI audit samples. This will increase efficiency by replacing the current process which is time consuming and must be completed by the Information Services Administration. BOR has also established a strategic goal of reconciling the citation inventory of 5% of all unused citations per year

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and will focus first on the agencies with the largest amounts of unused citations. This process and the related procedures will be documented in a new policy.

**Finding 2 – Process Standardization**

Developing a standardized process to document, review, and monitor TCATS error corrections would enhance the consistency and validity of error corrections.

**Recommendations**

We recommend the Bureau of Records create a standardized process for documenting, reviewing, and monitoring TCATS error corrections.

**Management Response**

BOR will develop a formalized process to ensure all senior liaison officers are consistently working with clerks of court to document, review, and monitor TCATS error corrections. This process would include implementing a standard tracking sheet, which clearly identifies the date, county, and number of errors worked per day for each county in the assigned region. The process would also require the liaisons to submit supporting documentation to the OMC II Manager and require the manager to select a sample from the liaison's submissions to ensure the information is consistent with the new process and consistent with the totals reported. This new process will be documented in the liaison's desk manual.